The Mandate (Quality of Writing)

Department of the Army writing will be clear, concise, and effective. Army correspondence must aid effective and efficient communication and decision making.

AR 25-50

Army Writing Standards

- **Effective Army writing:**

  - transmits a clear message in a single, rapid reading.

  - is generally free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

- **Good Army writing:**

  - is concise, organized, and right to the point.

  - meets two essential requirements.

AR 25-50

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Active vs Passive

Active: **SSG Jones counseled SGT Smith.**

Passive: ***SGT Smith was counseled by SSG Jones.***

Recognizing Passive Voice

Uses some form of the verb "to be":

am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been

plus (+)

main verb form ending usually in "ed," "en,"or "t"
(past participle form)

Examples: were completed, is requested, was seen, are written, was sent

Rules for Constructing Military Correspondence

- **Use short words.**

- **Keep sentences short.**

- **Write paragraphs that, with few exceptions, are no more than 10 lines.**

- **Avoid jargon.**

- **Use I, you, and we as subjects of sentences instead of this office, this headquarters, etc.**

- **Avoid sentences that begin with "It is…," "There is…," or "There are…."**

- **Write one-page letters and memorandums for most correspondence.**

- **Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.**

Computing the Clarity Index

ASL (Average Sentence Length) = $\dfrac{\text{Number of Words}}{\text{Number of Sentences}}$

PLW (Percentage of Long Words) = $\dfrac{\text{Number of Long Words}}{\text{Number of Words}}$ X 100

Clarity Index = ASL + PLW

Rules for Counting Words

- Words include numbers, letters, symbols, and groups of letters surrounded by white space.

- Count hyphenated words and contractions as one word.

- Count each ACRONYM as one word.

- Don't count the words in headings or subject lines.

Examples:

One word each: couldn't, DARCOM, i.e., long-term

Two words each: AR 670-1, TM 9-1920-238-13P

Three words each: DA Pam 600-67, 3 x 6

Rules for Counting Sentences

- Count as one sentence any independent clause ending with a period, question mark, or exclamation point.
- Count independent clauses separated by a semicolon or colon as separate sentences.
- If a lead-in is an independent clause, count it as a sentence; if it is a phrase or dependent clause, do not count it as a sentence.
- Do not count headings or subject lines as sentences.

Example:

The troops were ready for battle; still they hoped for peace. (two sentences)

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Rules for Counting Syllables

- Count acronyms that you do not pronounce as words as one syllable, for acronyms pronounced as words, count the number of syllables.

- Count a string of numbers as one syllable unless it contains a hyphen. If it contains a hyphen, count each portion as a syllable.

Examples:

MACOM (2 syllables)

NCO   (1 syllable)

DA Form 2407-1   (4 syllables)

Example for Clarity Index

Sergeant Smith is an energetic, conscientious, and versatile worker who is deserving of recognition. Possessing an excellent education, he is studious by nature, meticulously accurate as to his facts, and thorough in his work. Highly intelligent with an alert, active mind, he quickly perceives and correctly evaluates the essential elements of any problem. He communicates his views without generating resentment. He speaks and writes with great clarity, and for that reason he is outstanding as an instructor.